



MCC LIBRARY FACT SHEET JULY 26, 2025

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY UNION AUSTRALIA V BRITISH & IRISH LIONS SECOND TEST

THE LIONS, THE TOM RICHARDS CUP AND THE TOM RICHARDS MEDAL

The combined “home nations” (England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales) teams were referred to as the British Isles or the British rugby football team throughout the twentieth century. They were first dubbed the Lions by journalists covering the team’s 1924 tour of South Africa. The British Lions moniker was formally adopted in 1950. It was not until the Lions’ tour of Australia in 2001 that the tourists were officially called the British & Irish Lions. For the 2001 tour the Tom Richards Cup was inaugurated. It was awarded to the victors of series contested between the Lions and Australia, and honored Tom Richards, the only Australian-born footballer to represent both Australia (1908 and 1912) and the British Isles (1910). Richards also served at Gallipoli and in France during the Great War and was awarded the Military Cross. Australia won the inaugural Tom Richards Cup series in 2001, but the Lions won it in 2013. The cup has been retired but the player of the 2025 series will receive the Tom Richards Medal.

BRITISH ISLES/BRITISH & IRISH LIONS IN AUSTRALIA

In 1888 a British rugby team visited Australia for the first time. The tour was organised by Arthur Shrewsbury, Alfred Shaw and James Lillywhite, who observed that football in Australia had overtaken cricket in popularity. Therefore, they hoped a football tour might prove to be the financial success which their 1886/87 English cricket tour was not. The football tour was not sanctioned by the Rugby Union in England who considered it to have professional undertones. Yet, the players were required to sign statutory declarations stating they were not being paid. It was also a dual-code tour. They played 19 games of Australian football in Victoria, South Australia, and the Maitland district of New South Wales, winning six and drawing one of them, and 35 rugby matches in New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland, and New Zealand, of which the tourists won 27. Robert Seddon captained this side initially, but he drowned in a sculling accident on the Hunter River in Maitland on August 15. Thereafter, Andrew Stoddart became captain. The tour lasted 250 days and is retrospectively recognised as the first Lions tour.

The first official tour of Australia by a British Isles rugby football team was the four-Test series in 1899. The tourists won the series three matches to one. Overall, 21 matches were played by the squad of 23 footballers, and it was the first time all “home Unions” (England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales) were represented. They also played against a Victorian rugby team at the MCG. The tourists were in Australia again in 1904 and won all matches including the three Tests. For many years the British Isles teams regarded play in Australia as a warm-up prior to heading to New Zealand where Rugby Union was the dominant football code.

In Sydney, 1930, the crowd of 30,000 at the SCG watched Australia snatch a 6-5 victory, with Tom Lawton leading the charge. Even so, the Lions’ dominance prevailed throughout much of the twentieth century. In 1950 the team won all its games in Australia except for one against a New South Wales XV in Newcastle. The Lions won both Tests against the Wallabies in 1959, and, in 1966 the Lions won all five non-Test matches as well as the two Tests. The Lions dominated the second Test, winning 31-0, after a five try blitz in the second half. It was the highest ever Test rugby winning margin at the time.

In 1989 New Zealand was left out of the Lions’ itinerary, the team touring Australia only. The Lions won 11 of the 12 matches played over six weeks and had a 2-1 Test series victory. The Wallabies, with Nick Farr Jones at the helm, triumphed in the first Test in Sydney 30-12, while the Lions were victorious in Brisbane, 19-12. An unforgettable error by David Campese in the final game in Sydney cost the Wallabies the Test and the series. Of the three Tests played in 2001, the Wallabies won 2-1 with Matt Burke performing well for the Wallabies. The last Lions tour of Australia was in 2013, the tourists winning the series 2-1.

DID YOU KNOW?

The 1888 British rugby team played an Australian football match on the MCG. It was their first ever match under Australian football rules, and it was against Victoria’s reigning premier, Carlton. The June 16 game drew much publicity and more than 25,000 spectators to the MCG, but the Brits were totally outclassed, losing 14 goals to three. The *Argus* reported, “The red, white and blue on the turf looked well, though on the scoring board it looked a sickly show.”

ANDREW STODDART – BRITISH & IRISH LION AND MCC HON. LIFE MEMBER

Andrew Stoddart, a member of Arthur Shrewsbury’s cricket team which had played a Test in Sydney during February 1888, took over as captain of the British football team after Robert Seddon’s death. As an amateur member of the English cricket team, he was elected an Honorary Life Member of the Melbourne Cricket Club on February 25, 1888. Stoddart is the only person to have captained England/Britain in cricket, rugby and Australian football.

RUGBY UNION AT THE MCG

- There have been 21 rugby football matches (including curtain raisers) at the MCG.
- The first rugby football match played on the MCG was between Waratah, a leading Sydney rugby club, and Carlton, the famous Australian football club, on June 29, 1878.
- The highest score in a rugby match at the MCG is 56. This has been achieved twice. On June 30, 1951, a New Zealand XV scored 13 tries to defeat an Australian XV, 56 to 11. In the curtain raiser to the July 11, 1998, Bledisloe Cup match at the MCG, the Australian Barbarians team defeated Victoria 56 to 22.
- The greatest winning margin for a rugby match at the MCG is 51 points, when a South African XV scored 13 tries on June 18, 1921, to defeat Victoria 51 points to nil.
- The most points scored by a rugby player in a game at the MCG is 28. Ron Jarden of a New Zealand XV scored 28 points, consisting of five tries, five conversions and one penalty, on June 30, 1951, against Victoria.
- There have been four international rugby Test matches at the MCG. All have been Bledisloe Cup games between Australia and New Zealand. Australia has won twice and New Zealand twice.
- The largest attendance for a Rugby Union match at the MCG is 90,119 for the Australia v New Zealand Bledisloe Cup/Tri Nations Test match in 1997.

All Rugby Union Matches at the MCG

Date	Comp		T	C	P	D	M	Pts		T	C	P	D	M	Pts	Att.
29/06/1878		Waratah (NSW)	1	1	-	-	-	1	Carlton	1	1	-	-	-	1	6,000
29/06/1881		"The Squadron"	1	1	-	-	-	1	"Wanderers"	0	0	-	-	-	0	3,000
29/07/1899	VRFC	C. Diamond XV	5	1	0	2	0	25	K.A.Sutherland XV	0	0	1	0	0	3	na
12/08/1899	VRFC	Rice XV	3	1	0	0	0	11	C. Diamond XV	1	0	0	0	0	3	na
19/08/1899		Victoria RFC	0	0	0	0	0	0	British Isles XV	5	4	1	1	0	30	8,000
10/08/1908		Australian XV	6	4	0	0	0	26	Victoria	2	0	0	0	0	6	1,500
06/07/1912	VRU	Melbourne	1	1	0	1	0	9	East Melbourne	1	1	0	0	0	5	cr
18/06/1921		South African XV	13	6	0	0	0	51	Victoria	0	0	0	0	0	0	cr
13/09/1930		Metropolitan 'B'	*	*	*	*	*	*	Royal Naval Coll.	*	*	*	*	*	*	cr
13/09/1930		Metropolitan 'A'	*	*	*	*	*	25	United Services	*	*	*	*	*	6	cr
13/09/1930		British XV	10	4	1	0	0	41	Victoria	8	6	0	0	0	36	7,166
21/05/1949		Metropolitan	*	*	*	*	*	3	HMAS Sydney	*	*	*	*	*	8	cr
21/05/1949		Maoris (NZ)	9	4	0	0	0	35	Sthn. Aust. States	1	1	0	1	0	8	9,912
29/07/1950		Victoria	3	0	0	1	0	12	Queensland	7	5	0	0	0	31	7,479
30/06/1951		Australian XV	2	1	1	0	0	11	New Zealand XV	13	7	1	0	0	56	8,902
26/07/1997		Australia U19	1	0	2	0	-	11	New Zealand U19	4	3	2	0	-	32	cr
26/07/1997	Test	Australia	2	1	2	0	-	18	New Zealand	3	3	4	0	-	33	90,119
11/07/1998		Victoria	4	1	0	0	-	22	Aust. Barbarians	10	3	0	0	-	56	cr
11/07/1998	Test	Australia	2	1	4	0	-	24	New Zealand	2	0	2	0	-	16	75,147
30/06/2007	Test	Australia	2	2	2	0	-	20	New Zealand	2	1	1	0	-	15	78,959
29/07/2023	Test	Australia	1	1	0	0	-	7	New Zealand	6	4	0	0	-	38	83,944

Key: T = try. C = conversion. P = penalty. D = drop goal. M = mark goal. Pts = points.

VRFC = Victoria Rugby Football Club. VRU = Victorian Rugby Union.

cr = curtain raiser. na = not applicable (no record). gold highlight = British Isles/British tour matches.

* An asterisk indicates a gap in the MCC Library's knowledge at printing. If you can help fill these gaps, please contact the MCC Library.

WALLABIES AND LIONS TEST STATISTICS

Australia v British Isles/British Lions/British & Irish Lions Test Matches by Venue

Venue	City	Won by Australia	Won by British Isles / British & Irish Lions	Drawn
Ballymore Stadium	Brisbane	0	1	0
Brisbane Exhibition Ground	Brisbane	0	4	0
Docklands Stadium	Melbourne	2	0	0
Gabba	Brisbane	0	1	0
Lang Park	Brisbane	0	3	0
Stadium Australia	Sydney	1	1	0
Sydney Cricket Ground	Sydney	2	6	0
Sydney Football Stadium	Sydney	1	1	0
Sydney Sports Ground	Sydney	0	1	0
		6	18	0

WALLABIES AND LIONS TEST STATISTICS

Australia v British Isles/British Lions/British & Irish Lions Synopsis

	Tests Played	Tests Won	Tests Lost	Tests Drawn	Total Points	Series Played	Series Won	Series Drawn
Australia	24	6	18	0	267	9	2	0
British Isles/British & Irish Lions	24	18	6	0	441	9	7	0

All Australia v British Isles/British Lions/British & Irish Lions Tests

Tour	Date	Australia	British & Irish Lions	Venue	City	Attendance	Test Series Result
1899	June 24	13	3	SCG	Sydney	28,000	British Isles 3-1
1899	July 22	0	11	Brisbane Exhibition Ground	Brisbane	15,000	
1899	August 5	10	11	SCG	Sydney	16,000	
1899	August 12	0	13	SCG	Sydney	7,000	
1904	July 2	0	17	SCG	Sydney	34,000	British Isles 3-0
1904	July 23	3	17	Brisbane Exhibition Ground	Brisbane	15,000	
1904	July 30	0	16	SCG	Sydney	24,000	
1930	August 30	6	5	SCG	Sydney	30,712	Australia
1950	August 19	6	19	SCG	Sydney	20,000	Lions
1950	August 26	3	24	Brisbane Exhibition Ground	Brisbane	20,000	2-0
1959	June 6	6	17	Brisbane Exhibition Ground	Brisbane	20,000	Lions
1959	June 13	3	24	Sydney Sports Ground	Sydney	15,521	2-0
1966	May 28	8	11	SCG	Sydney	42,303	Lions
1966	June 4	0	31	Lang Park	Brisbane	18,500	2-0
1989	July 1	30	12	Sydney Football Stadium	Sydney	39,433	Lions 2-1
1989	July 8	12	19	Ballymore Stadium	Brisbane	20,525	
1989	July 15	18	19	Sydney Football Stadium	Sydney	39,401	
2001	June 30	13	29	Gabba	Brisbane	37,460	Australia 2-1
2001	July 7	35	14	Docklands Stadium	Melbourne	56,605	
2001	July 14	29	23	Stadium Australia	Sydney	84,188	
2013	June 22	21	23	Lang Park	Brisbane	52,499	Lions 2-1
2013	June 29	16	15	Docklands Stadium	Melbourne	56,771	
2013	July 6	16	41	Stadium Australia	Sydney	83,702	
2025	July 19	19	27	Lang Park	Brisbane	52,299	

Most Tries in Australia v Lions Test Matches

AM Butcher	Brit Is.	2 tries	1899	Test 3	SCG
WM Llewellyn	Brit Is.	2 tries	1904	Test 1	SCG
JE Nelson	Lions	2 tries	1950	Test 2	SCG
MJ Price	Lions	2 tries	1959	Test 2	SSG
DK Jones	Lions	2 tries	1966	Test 2	Lang Pk
J Roffe	Aust	2 tries	2001	Test 2	Dock Std
D Herbert	Aust	2 tries	2001	Test 3	Std Aust
I Folau	Aust	2 tries	2013	Test 1	Lang Pk

Highest Score

Australia	35 pts	July 7	2001	Test 2	Dock Std
Lions	41 pts	July 6	2013	Test 3	Std Aust

Greatest Winning Margin

Australia	21 pts	July 7	2001	Test 2	Dock
Lions	31 pts	June 4	1966	Test 2	Lang Pk

Most Points in Australia v Lions Test Matches

M Burke	Aust	25 pts	2001	Test 2	Dock Std
SL Halfpenny	Lions	21 pts	2013	Test 3	Std Aust
M Burke	Aust	19 pts	2001	Test 3	Std Aust
JP Wilkinson	Lions	18 pts	2001	Test 3	Std Aust
BL Jones	Lions	16 pts	1950	Test 1	SCG
AG Hastings	Lions	15 pts	1989	Test 3	SFS
SL Halfpenny	Lions	15 pts	2013	Test 2	Dock Std

Shutouts (held pointless)

Australia	0 pts	July 22	1899	Test 2	Bris EG
Australia	0 pts	August 12	1899	Test 4	SCG
Australia	0 pts	July 2	1904	Test 1	SCG
Australia	0 pts	July 30	1904	Test 3	SCG
Australia	0 pts	June 4	1966	Test 2	Lang Pk

British & Irish Lions' Lowest Score v Australia

British Isles	3 pts	June 24	1899	Test 1	SCG
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FACT SHEETS ON THE MCC WEBSITE

The MCC Library's matchday fact sheets can be accessed through the MCC website at: <http://tinyurl.com/mcccatalogue>

This fact sheet was prepared by MCC Library Volunteer Lesley Smith,
with MCC Deputy Librarian – Trevor Ruddell

Scenes from British Isles' 1899 Tour Match
against the Victoria Rugby Football Club at the Melbourne Cricket Ground
Saturday August 19, 1899



British Isles Rugby Football Team



Victoria Rugby Football Club

